

TERROR OF CAGED ANIMALS

Haunted by Lurking Peril of Disease

By

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Administering an Anesthetic Preparatory to an Operation

SUDDEN and apparently causeless disturbances among caged beasts more than once have terrified attendants and onlookers, and puzzled animal specialists. Wherever menageries are kept such outbreaks are not uncommon. For instance, there was the savage attack upon the lion-trainer at Coney Island last season, who was trying to emulate the ancient prophet in Babylon.

Of the thousands of horrified spectators who witnessed the narrowly averted tragedy none ever will forget the sight and sound of the great jungle kings as they lashed and tore at their erstwhile master as he was snatched from the very jaws of death. Of those thousands thronging about the arena a large majority no doubt thought that the beasts were possessed with a frenzy of rage. But surgeons and students of the ways and wiles, as well as woe, of the jungle creatures will tell you that the man-eaters on that dramatic occasion were stricken with terror rather than rage. They were fighting to escape from the stealthy and lurking peril which always haunts the animal cages in the guise of disease and pain.

Sultan, the prize lion, who is at once the handsomest and most treacherous representative of the genus *Felis leo* in captivity, was suffering from acute influenza, which was developing rapidly into incipient pneumonia—the most dreaded and most common guise of animal begyism. Sultan was in pain, and his roars had communicated something of his terror to the other lions in the Bostock cages, until they were wrought up to an almost unparalleled pitch of excitement and fear. Perhaps, as one of the best-known animal savants and surgeons in this country is inclined to believe, Sultan and his fellow-captives blindly reasoned that the source and author of the affliction visited upon the invalid lion was the lion-trainer. Hence their sudden and fear-driven attack upon the man.

This expert testimony as to the terror rather than rage which frequently drives the wilder animals to attack man was corroborated in the same arena at Coney Island when seven huge lions, led by Prince and Baltimore, combined in a terrible onslaught upon Captain Bonavita, who received injuries requiring the amputation of his arm. As the invalid Sultan was guilty of the former attack, Prince was the disease and terror-stricken culprit this time. Prince was suffering with an abscess under his right eye, and it had come to a head during the hours preceding the exhibition. Goaded by torture and terror, the suffering brute was fighting the unseen enemy, rather than the lion-trainer who happened to be within the zone of his claws.

Only within the past two or three years animal exhibitors and physicians have learned that in nine cases out of ten where captive animals—those that have become accustomed and apparently reconciled to the life of the cages—turn and attack their trainers it is due primarily to disease and its accompanying pain. This discovery, in the opinion of

many foremost animal exhibitors, is the most important step ever made in the study and training of wild animals.

As John T. Smith, director of the Central Park Menagerie, New-York, remarked in discussing the many trials and tribulations of his calling, a wild animal, such as the lion, leopard, tiger, hippopotamus and venomous reptiles, really never is tamed. It is only trained, and, he declared, all the training on earth will not stamp out the smoldering animal instinct to fight and slay. But in classifying the laws of claw and fang, a number of acknowledged authorities on animal lore are agreed that a naturally healthy beast seldom will attack a keeper or trainer without provocation. Only when mental follows physical derangement are the jungle denizens prone to rend and slay in their fearful and fearing efforts to throw off and escape their ancient and pestilential bogies, disease and pain.

Returning to Prince, a lion that has seven victims to his credit or discredit, had his keepers known four years ago that Prince was subject to chronic abscess in the region of his right eye, it is probable that the seven lives which he sacrificed would have been saved; for it was not until a year ago that his owner discovered that Prince was stone-blind in his right optic. An abscess had been four years forming under the eye and extending backward so as to affect the optic nerve. This abscess was discovered in a remarkable way.

The menagerie, of which Prince is a star attraction, was exhibiting at Richmond, Virginia, when the royal brute became engaged in a terrific battle with three other lions imprisoned in the same cage with him. In course of the encounter one of the lions slashed Prince under his right eye, laying open a portion of the nose and freeing nearly a pint of pus which had accumulated under the organ.

The abscess was in such an advanced stage that an immediate operation was decided upon as the only means of preventing blood-poison and death. As Prince was worth more than his weight in gold as a menagerie attraction, it was necessary to cover the cavity from which the useless eye was to be taken. Hence the novel expedient of giving Prince a glass eye was decided upon.

On the night preceding the delicate operation the huge lion was left severely alone in his cage, and his fear and terror were so palpable as to attract the attention of his keepers. All through the night vigil the poor brute covered in a far corner of his cage, a perfect embodiment of fear. Early the next morning, Bonavita, his trainer, got into the cage and tried to entice the invalid to the front where he could be lassoed and strapped to the bars. Bonavita said afterward that he himself never had feared an animal so much as he feared Prince during those few minutes that were required to drive the wounded lion within range of the lassos.

Finally when the noose was fastened the trainer choked off an agonizing roar by thrusting a big stick between the gnashing teeth of his invalid charge. Prince managed to get one foot into the noose in a final effort to hurl himself upon the trainer; but the rope was pulled taut and the great brute was thrown violently on the bottom of the cage

and securely strapped. Then an inch rope was passed between his jaws and so twisted as to prevent his bit-



Captain Bonavita and a Lion That Once Nearly Killed Him

ing off the other tetherings. The eye was removed, deftly and swiftly the cavity washed and disinfected, and Isaac Mayer and Max Koehler, the animal opticians, quickly inserted the combination pupil and cornea. One of them held the eyelids apart while the other slipped the artificial device into place.

Bonavita then hurried from the cage; in a trice the ropes were slackened, and shaking himself free and lashing his tail with satisfaction, the patient rose and paced up and down his cage. He clearly did not know what to do, but his astonishing transformation from terrorized rage to humble docility had all the marks of animal gratitude. It was feared that he might try to claw out the artificial eye or smash it against the iron bars; but he seemed unable to make out what had happened. His fear or anger had dissolved, and he looked around wistfully for his cell-mates before stretching himself out for a comfortable siesta, the first he had had in weeks. It was a small abscess under the glass eye that caused Prince to so demoralize the Coney Island animals in leading the attack on his trainer.

New-Yorkers will recall the notable panic which, beginning with the elephant Princess, spread to the primates and thence to the tigers and leopards, by which it was carried to the lions and other animals of the Forepaugh circus in Madison Square Garden two years ago. On that occasion the entire force of trainers and attendants was required to allay the carnivorous cyclone that swept through the Garden. Roaring so as to be heard twenty squares distant, the nine lions of the circus were all badly bruised and battered by hurling themselves against the bars of their cages, while thousands of dollars in circus paraphernalia was destroyed by a trio of elephants, that snapped their chains as though they were threads and charged trumpeting wildly through the vast inclosure.

Strange and paradoxical as it may seem, the mammoth panic on that occasion was traced afterward to an attack of acute indigestion on the part of Princess. While indigestion is a malady common to captive animals, it is seldom fatal except with the pachyderms and hippopotamuses. When an elephant goes mad it generally can be traced to its lungs or stomach. Pneumonia and violent indigestion are the two grim phantoms which haunt the pachyderm.

Princess, after the manner of her kind when the pachydermic digestive organs are out of tune, had refused resolutely to eat anything for three days prior to the Madison Square Garden stampede. It was the mole of hunger burrowing within the huge mammal and gnawing her life away that smote the starving Princess with terror and, by the strange wireless animal telegraphy, was transmitted by her to her companion kindred of the wild.

Thick as is the skin of the pachyderm, it is an invitation rather than a barrier to disease. Why? Be-



Lancing an Abscess for Tom